

Dimensions and Aspects of the Idea of Renaissance

Renaissance (Renaissance in French, Renascimento in Italian) as an English word comes from the Latin root renascor meaning to be born again, to begin to grow again. (renatus= reborn) Metonymically in Latin it can mean : to rise again, to be restored or to reappear. Figuratively, again in Latin, it can mean : to be renewed, to come alive or to revive, even to recur.

In the English language both spellings are now used. Renaissance and Renaissance.¹ As a technical term it refers to the transitional movement in Europe from late medieval to early modern; in literature and the arts it refers to the revival of European art and letters in the fifteenth century. In architecture it signifies the transition from Gothic to neo-classical

But it can be applied to other cultural revivals - e.g. the Indian Renaissance of the 18th century or the Islamic Renaissance in the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad (1275-1517). Since the present writer is convinced that the 18th century Indian Renaissance was incomplete, and has to be completed in the future, the basic orientation in this paper will be on the normative dimensions and aspects of any ~~renaissance~~ cultural renaissance.

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I Past-Future Dialectic

Toynbee, for example, refers to two other Renaissances in Europe, the Carolingian Renaissance of the 8th and 9th centuries, and the Italian Renaissance or Resorgimento of the 19th century. Both these renaissances have two things in common, and in looking at these common elements, we begin to get an idea of what is normative for a renaissance. The first thing about the two renaissances of Europe separated by a millennia of history (within which lies the main European renaissance of the 15th century) is their consciousness of reviving the ancient glory of the once great Roman Empire in a contemporary context. But this looking back with pride to the past is accompanied by a second element: a looking forward to the future with bright hope. These two elements - a dialectic of moving

between pride about a past golden age and a confident optimistic, vibrantly hopeful outlook towards the future, seem to be two essential elements of a Renaissance which we can pin down from the beginning.

But is the simultaneous occurrence of these two factors merely an accident of history or an automatic cycle phenomenon ? Is Shelley right in the last chorus of his Hellas:

The Word's great age begin anew,
The golden years return,
The Earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream

Toynbee, who quotes Shelley with obvious disapproval, feels that such a fatalistic attitude is the real enemy of a Renaissance. If Europeans were to assume today, that, because the rise and fall of civilisations is an automatic, cyclical, necessary and fate-controlled process from which there is no escape, that assumption would lead to the death of European civilisation. For Toynbee 16 civilisations have risen and fallen. Nine others are now at the point of death. Western civilisation is the 26th which has not died, nor is at the point of death. And therefore, says this great European:

"Though sixteen civilisations may have perished already to our knowledge, and nine others may be now at the point of death, we - the twentysixth - are not compelled to submit the riddle of our fate to the blind arbitrament of statistics. The divine spark of creative power is still alive in us, and, if we have the grace to kindle it into flame, then the stars in their courses cannot defeat our efforts to attain the goal of human endeavour".

We will come back to Toynbee several times in this paper, but let us not here as a primary normative requirement of a Renaissance: the creative dialectic between pride in a glorious past, and brightly hopeful desire to move into and create a glorious future. Let us also note that these are deep feelings or human emotions, originating in the ruling class, into which the proletariat is then co-opted, often without fully understanding.

II The External Stimulus

Every renaissance has, it seems, an external stimulus, usually the experience of being over-run by alien peoples, or at least the fear of the enemy at the doors. Toynbee is, of course, very eloquent at this point. ~~Toynbee is~~ The "contact between civilisations in space" can have either disastrous consequences for one or both, or can prove stimulating to either. In his survey of encounters between mutually contemporary civilisation, Toynbee devotes major space to the contacts of the Modern West with Russia with Orthodox Christendom, with the Hindu world, with the Islamic world, with the Jews, with the Far Eastern and with Native American cultures, and finds certain common features in all these encounters.

(1) The contacts are mainly "middle class" and the western middle class is the bearer of so-called "modernity" to the middle class of other cultures, who become "an artificial substitute for a home-grown middle class" a manufactured intelligentsia. (2) The difference between the home-grown middle class and its manufactured artificial substitutes in non-western societies is that the home-grown variety is at home in its own culture, whereas the manufactured varieties are not. The latter are exotic, - "products and symptoms, not of natural growth, but of their own societies' discomfiture in collisions with an alien Modern West. They were symbols, not of strength but of weakness". (3) Therefore these non-western imitation middle classes have a love-hate relationship to the original (odi et amo), which was itself a symptom, "the measure of its fore-boding of its inability to emulate Western middle class achievement". Toynbee cites as an example our own "Sikh Khalsa that had been called into being by a decision to fight the Mughal ascendancy with its own weapons".

(2) It was usually after the over-running of one civilisation has ebbed and flowed, or advanced and receded, that the major influences on each other begin to take place. But the first reaction is to take on some of the more aggressive characteristics of the aggressor in order to repel him - as happened to our Sikhs and Marattas in reaction to the Mughal invasion. This can take the form of military aggressiveness, or alternatively, spiritual, intellectual and ideological aggression, and more often, a combination of the two.

But the best learning from each other takes place after the initial aggression and counter aggression have somewhat abated.

(3) There is also the possibility of a pacific and isolationist response to aggression. This was the early Chinese and Japanese response to the Western aggression of the Portuguese. Tibetans and Burmese have tried the same with much more persistence success in such pacific- isolationist resistance is rare, and even in these rare instances, rather pathetic in their very success.

(4) It is also fascinating to observe that sometimes the aggression may defeat itself by its own internecine conflicts. The Portuguese, the France, the Dutch and the British fought each other in their bid to dominate India, and each suffered from this conflict. Even today, there is not only the conflict between America and Western Europe on the one hand, but even more important, between Western Marxism and Western liberalism on the other. The victims of aggression often seek to cash in on these internal squabbles of the aggressor.

With all these nuances, it is correct to say that the second most important requirement for a renaissance is a creative encounter with an alien culture, civilisation and values. The victim culture may reject many elements of the aggressor culture. Gandhi himself rejected the acquisitiveness, the aggressiveness, the love of affluence and comfort, and the gratificationist approach to life and life-fulfilment, which elements were central to Western culture. But neither were the Indian people willing to follow Gandhi, nor could Gandhi prevent the massive over-running of our culture by Western culture. In fact was not Gandhi himself a product more of the encounter of cultures than of the Indian culture by itself ? What about Raja Ram Mohan Roy or Bankim Chandra Chatterjee ?

At this stage we need only to affirm the need for an external stimulus in the Renaissance of any culture. Detailed study can help us isolate certain necessary features for a creative encounter of cultures, but this paper cannot attempt such analysis.

III

The Cultural Element - Art, Language and Literature

Toynbee, in his Study of History (Abridged Vol 2: chapter 10, XXXIV, "A survey of Renaissances", lists the following major renaissances in history:

- (a) Late Medieval Italian Renaissance of Hellenism (15th century)
- (b) The Carolingian Renaissance (9th century)
- (c) The Revival of Confucian Philosophy in Far Eastern Society,
with the re-establishment of the
T'ang dynasty in AD 622.
- (d) Asshurbanipal's nascent universal state of Assyria -
(7th century BC)
- (e) Constantine Porphyrogenitus' revival of Byzantium -
- (f) Yung Lo
- (g) K'ang Hsi
- (h) Ch'ien Lung

In many of these revivals of ancient culture, a common element was the revival of a language and literature as well as new schools of the visual arts. (669-626 B.C.)

Asshurbanipal's two clay tablet libraries of Sumerian and Akkadian classical literature were destroyed in the sack of Nineveh in 612 B.C. We do not know enough therefore of its contents. The renaissance itself was short-lived and probably ended with the death of the scholarly Emperor Asshurbanipal (Asura-vanipala) in 626 B.C. There is evidence, however, that his library and the literary scholars he attracted around himself and his library played a major role in the revival of the short-lived Assyrian universal empire.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus (reigned AD 912-59) who wrote a book on imperial administration was likewise a scholar whose rule ushered in a literary renaissance in Byzantium in the 10th century A.D.⁽⁵⁾ His collection of ancient literary works was a source of inspiration.

Yung Lo (15 century AD), the Second Emperor of the Minz Dynasty in China, assembled a library of 22877 books, which again was a major factor in the Ming Renaissance in China.

Even in the 15th century Italian Renaissance of Europe, the work of the Popes in assembling libraries and organizing scholars played a major role, though Pope Nicholas' (1447-1455) library had only 9000 volumes. The Carolingian Renaissance was certainly inspired by the revival of learning, inspired by Theodore of Tarsus, the Venerable Bede, (673-735 AD) and Alcuin of York (735-804 AD). The smothering of learning by the Barbarians from the north practically extinguished the lamp lit by Charlemagne

From our Indian view point, it is useful for us to consider what happened in the 18th and 19th centuries when the foundations of modern India were being laid. The debate in the British parliament gives an admirable survey of the two options before the colonial masters.

One option is typified by William Carey, the Cobber turned scholar-missionary. His belief, which he implemented with relentless effort and unparalleled skill, was that India could be revived only by making our Sanskrit classics available to the Indian people in their own modern tongues. The college of Fost William, which later become Presidency college of Calcutta University, was established for promoting such learning. Its curriculum of study then included Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit, in addition to English; but also Bengali, Marathi, Hindusthani, Telugu, Tamil and Kanarese; and also the Greek, Latin and English classics, as well as modern languages of Europe. Dr. Gilchrist was Professor of Hindusthani; Licut. J. Baillie taught Arabic; Mr. H.B. Edmonstone was Professor of Persian. William Carey was the teacher of Bengali and Sanskrit. On the side he collected butterflies and other biological specimens of Indian flora and fauna, and translated not only the Christian Bible but also the Hindu epics and the Gita into Indian languages. Carey spoke idiomatic Sanskrit fluently. He edited and published The Ramayana of Valmeeki, in the original Sanskrit, with a prose translation and explanatory notes in 1806-1810, which opened the Hindu epics and other literature to the English speaking and to other European nations- leading to many literary and philosophical

and translations on European philosophy and literature is a subject for another paper. Here our interest is in Carey's attitude to what was necessary for the renaissance of India. His magnum opus : A Universal Dictionary of the Oriental Languages, derived from the Sanskrit, of which that language is to be the groundwork, appeared in 1811. He edited the Sanskrit text of Hitopadesa, Dasakumaracarita and Bhartrhari's works. He also translated the Bible, into Bengali, Oriya, Maghadi, Assamese, Khasi and Manipoori. His Sanskrit translation of the Bible appeared in 1811-1818, as did the Hindusthani version. He also produced translations in Marathi, Punjabi, and in all the Rajasthani dialects (Udaypuri, Jaipuri, Ujjaini, Bikaneri, and so on). He initiated the first non-English newspaper the Samachar Darpan (1818). Carey started the movement against Sathi and against the abandoning of female babies to drown in the Sea at Sagar, and also against slavery. He was the founder of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India. He introduced printing and paper manufacture in India.

To summarise William Carey's option then, we could list

- (a) Promote learning in general, particularly languages and sciences;
- (b) provide access to Indian classical literature and arts
- (c) make possible the knowledge of non-Indian civilisations and cultures also.
- (d) help Indians know their own religions heritage, as well as other religions.

Opposed to this was another British view - that of Alexander Duff, which, according to the present writer, has prevailed in Indian higher education and stands in the way of a genuine Indian Renaissance. Alexander Duff was also a British (Scottish) missionary, and in fact the successor of Carey. He came to India in 1830, then 24 years of age. He laid the foundations of our national educational system - the British Indian Education Charter of 1853 and the 1854 Educational Despatch of Lord Halifax. Duff came to the view, shared by many western educated Indians, that our national heritage is an obstacle to our progress in modern science and technology. He conceived western liberal education as a "mine" that would "undermine" the resistance of India's ~~repe~~ superstitions culture. The debate in the British

Parliament was on which of these two options should prevail in British policy in India. The 1835 decision, to develop Higher Education through English, was in public recognized as the advice of Thomas Babington Macaulay, but that advice came originally from Alexander Duff.

Sardar Panikkar says:

"Macaulay believed that, once the Indian people became familiar with Western knowledge, Hindu Society would dissolve itself..... In the modernization of India, this system of education played a decisive part. But what it failed to achieve was either the undermining of the Hindu religion or dissolution of Hindu society"⁷

Even now we are tardy in realizing, pace Panikkar, how deeply our nation has been deformed and distorted by this system of education about which we sometimes foolishly think that it was a failure. The educational system has not merely destroyed much of the creativity of the nation; it has created an elite which is so deeply enslaved by a particular way of thinking that it cannot even recognize its own bondage. We still think that a scientific secular temper will save us. We still think of western norms as standard. And even in looking for a Renaissance, we look for light from the West.

Notes

1. The Oxford English Dictionary tells us that the english word Renaissance was first used in AD 1845, and that Mathew Arnold changed the spelling to Renascence. In French too the word was, according to Toynbee, first used by E.J. Delechuze (1781-1863), to describe "the impact made by a dead Hellenic civilisation on Western Christendom at a particular time and place, namely Northern and Central Italy in the late medieval period". Toynbee A Study of History, Abridged 2 vol edn, Vol. II. P. 267).

2. Arnold J. Toynbee A Study of History (abridged 2 volume laurel edition of the 10 volumes by D.C. Somerwell), Dell, New York, 1965, 3rd printing 1971, Vol I p. 297)

3. " ...during the Currency of the Modern Age of Western history,

TOWARDS AN INDIAN RENAISSANCE

Points for Discussion

1. The meaning of the word Renaissance, Renascimento, from Latin root renascor - means to be born again, to begin to grow again. Same root as 'nature', renatus = reborn. What is reborn or revived?
2. Some examples of Renaissances
 1. Carolingian Renaissance - Europe - 8th and 9th centuries - Charlemagne
 2. Italian Renaissance or Resorgimento of 19th century
 3. European classical Renaissance - 15th century. Revival of art, literature and philosophy - as well as the classical tradition as a whole
 4. Indian Renaissance - 18th century. Bengali response to British cultural aggression. Ram Mohan Roy, Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj etc.

What is common to these?

3. Renaissance means the quickening of a civilisation. In Toynbee's scheme, in world history 16 civilisations have risen and died. Nine others are at the point of death, including Indian, Chinese, Roman, Greek, etc. Western civilisation - the 26th civilisation to rise, has neither died, nor is at the point of death, but is being widely questioned. What keeps the spark of a civilisation alive and what causes its death?
4. All renaissances seemed to have been prodded by an external stimulus, a creative encounter, - either positive or negative, sometimes a mixture of positive and negative factors. What are such stimuli?
 - e.g. (a) The violent encounter of civilisations, like the conquest of Alexander (4th century B.C.), the Moghul conquest or the British conquest;
 - (b) big increase in wealth?
 - (c) New interest in classics?

5. The cultural element seems very important - a revival of art and literature. Music, visual arts, philosophy and literary works both experience and express this renaissance. Schools and libraries with vibrant thought and creative research have always played an important role. (See Arnold Toynbee's "A Survey of Renaissances", which is Vol 2: ch 10, XXXIV, in his Study of History abridged edition). Does this precede and cause the Renaissance, or is it one of its marks?
6. The role of the middle class intellectuals, artists, writers etc in sparking a renaissance has been studied by Toynbee. The creativity may arise with the middle classes but must carry the masses. Can we say that this is no longer so today, and that the sparking of the renaissance can come from the masses?
7. Can a Renaissance be consciously engineered, or does it happen when certain factors fall into position? To what extent can conscious human effort trigger a renaissance when most of the conditions favourable to it are present?
8. If Renaissance is actually revival of something classical in our culture, then should we be back-ward looking for the deep study of that classical element, or should such deep study be dialectically related to the real aspirations of the people? Can we be future-oriented and rooted in the past at the same time? Looking back with pride to the past which is realistically understood, and at the same time looking forward to the future with a bright hope?
9. Communal elements like the RSS are interested in a revival, of an imagined Hindu Raj which existed in the past. What is wrong with that?
10. We are at a time when there are huge upheavals in socialist thought and its relation to "free enterprise". We are ourselves caught in a confluence of three forces - the ideas and institutions of western liberalism, a line of marxist thought which has always found it difficult to be flexible, and a deep nostalgia for our own past as Indians and our ^arel_n Indian identity. How do we steer our way through these forces?
11. What is the role of economic power in triggering a renaissance? Most renaissances have come a sudden inflow of wealth, by trade, conquest, war or plunder. What are the economic factors in India today that could contribute to a renaissance?
12. What role do individuals play in the sparking of a renaissance? What kind of individuals? Literatteurs, thinkers, men and women of action, painters, other artists?

THE UNFINISHED RENAISSANCE OF INDIA

Address at the Kerala Banga Samskriti Sangh, Ernakulam, Dec.19,1972.

Here India's North-East meets her South-west. The land of Tagore meets the home of Sankara. Durga's favourite haunt meets the earth that the sea gave in response to Parasurama's axe. The religious world which produced Ramakrishna and Vivekananda speaks with the people to whom the Syrian Carpenter Thomas brought the message of Christ ages ago.

My task today is to pay a tribute to Bengal - a pleasant task indeed, for there is so much that one could say. I shall not try to say everything. I am neither competent, nor have I that much of time at my disposal. My chief point shall be to draw our attention to the contribution of Bengal in the renaissance of India in the 19th century. I would like to submit that this Renaissance is not yet fully born, in fact that it is in danger of being aborted, unless we do certain things about it, and that fairly soon. It is here that I would exhort the Kerala-Banga Samskriti Sangh to concentrate its attention in the coming years.

More than 40 years ago on January 26, 1930, the Indian National Congress took a pledge for Purna Swaraj - to liberate India from all her bonds. This process of liberation, according to the pledge

drafted by Nehru* had four phases, Political liberation, economic liberation, cultural liberation, and spiritual liberation. We have barely completed the first of these four phases of the liberation of India which was the dream of the Fathers of the Indian Renaissance in the 19th century. For I regard that Indian Renaissance as part of the struggle of all mankind for liberation. We have to hold aloft the basic concerns of the freedom of mankind if we are not to become, as Malayalees and Bengalees are often ⁿproven to be, parochial and ^{uv}chauvinistic.

To see the Indian Renaissance of the 19th century as unfinished business, and to see it as part of a world-wide movement for the liberation of Man - this is the perspective in which we should study the Bengali contribution to the Renaissance of India.

The beginning of the Indian Renaissance, like all vital movements, was a religious event. We owe India's independent nationhood to this Renaissance, which could be dated, fairly accurately, in the beginning of the 19th century (1828) led by the great Bengali idealist Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1833). To integrate the best in India's past with the best of what could be got from anywhere in the world, whether British or Russian or Chinese, was the overriding motif of the Indian Renaissance. Upanishadic Universalism, we may call its guiding principle.

* Nehru, Towards Freedom Beacon, 1941 p.388-389

It was Bengal also that gave an illustrious galaxy of leaders to the Brahmo Samaj started by the Raja. The name of Keshab Chander Sen is of course controversial, for he sought to develop a new form of "Christianity without Christ" and blend it with the ancient heritage of India. The Tagore family and the Ramakrishna Sannyasis, I submit, have shown us a better path for the Renewal of India than Keshab Chandersen.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was an aristocrat and an intellectual without much mass appeal. I wish to submit, however, that the more popular movement of Gandhi would not have been possible without this highly intellectual experiment in thinking through problems, for I am convinced that true men of action have often caught the vision from some intellectual seer.

The Bengali Raja or Zamindar had been educated in Persian and Arabic at Patna, in Sanskrit ^{at} Benares, and in English with the officials of the East India Company.

If the Indian Renaissance is to be completed, one primary necessity is a wider and more diversified linguistic competence in at least a few people, so that ideas from other cultures can seep into our own. We are today in great danger of even our intellectuals being forced to choose between merely English or Indian languages.

I had not realized, when you invited me, that what you had wanted from me was a Christmas message. I should have spoken about the meaning of Christmas for non-Christians - a subject on which I could speak without a great deal of preparation.

But I have the feeling that Christ has a message for Christians, namely to listen to the best in Indian thought. We Christians have woefully failed at this point, and bear the major part of the responsibility for India's general unwillingness to listen to the Church's message.

I shall not speak of Christ or Christmas this evening. I shall speak of our own land, our own culture, our own Indian spiritual strivings and yearnings, in all of which also I see Christ working. I shall speak of the unfinished Renaissance of India, and beg of you, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Buddhists, Jews, all to take an active part in the huge task of completing this Renaissance which began in the last century.

I am pleased and honoured by the privilege that is mine today to address you.

There is a general problem of languages to be used in the institutions for mass education, but I am now speaking of an intellectual elite through whose writings and speeches ideas spread among the common people. Such an elite must have polyglot competence. Just English and the local languages plus Hindi will not do. The three-language formula may be all right for the masses, but an intellectual elite must have at least two other languages in addition to the three. Sanskrit is absolutely essential for it is the key to India's spiritual heritage. We have today very few people who are equally at home in Sanskrit literature and in European culture at the same time. This was Ram Mohan's great asset. The British respected him because he knew their culture at depth and well. Yet his ideas came out of the deep spring of Sanskrit studies as well.

But Rammohan had more than just English and Sanskrit in addition to his native Bengali and Hindi. He knew also Persian and Arabic. Our intelligentsia today are too much shut up in an Indo-Anglian culture. We have access, outside our own culture, only to the writings of Britain and America. And a genuine intellectual stimulus cannot come to us out of this commercial, pragmatic, semi-decadent Anglo-American culture. If the Indian Renaissance of the 19th century is to come to fruition, there should be an intellectual core in India that goes beyond Anglo-american utilitarian philosophies. And I am not thinking primarily of learning French and German, useful as these languages

certainly are. I wish to emphasize the need for a thorough knowledge of at least one language from outside western culture. Russian may be good, but it is still too close to western culture, and its heritage does not go very far beyond the 12th century A.D. Rammohan knew Persian and Arabic. Perhaps our intellectuals too need classical Arabic, or Chinese, both of which have an immense treasury of ancient wisdom which can never be satisfactorily acquired in translation.

The Raja did two things. He gave us texts of the ancient upaniṣads in a modern language. He gave us also a new and currently relevant reinterpretation of them. We also need to do these things again. Rammohan learned from the west and from Islamic civilization and then reinterpreted our ancient heritage in the light of these. Here 19th century Bengal showed us the way. Now if divided Bengal will be reunited again ^{in friendship} as it well may, a new Hindu-Muslim entente in a modern context is conceivable there in the next generation. Perhaps the crucible of suffering through which both Bengalis have been passing in these thirty years is a preparation for a new phase in the Indian Renaissance, for ultimately Bengali Hindus and Bengali Muslims will have to learn to live together in peace. We must beware of the subtle temptations in some of our political parties to fan the flames of hatred between the Hindu and Moslem communities. Only an intellectualism that transcends religious parochialism can show the way forward for nascent India. Here there is a word of warning even for

such excellent institutions like the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan.

India is a secular State, but this does not mean an anti-religious state as in the socialist and communist countries. It means only that no particular religion is given a preferred place, and that adherents of all religions⁷ and of no religion would all be treated alike by the law. The renaissance of India can be completed only when the rich and diverse religious heritage of India really provides for its various strands to meet together and stimulate each other, on a sound intellectual and spiritual basis which allows the circuit to be completed between its two poles, namely, our understanding of the present and our heritage of the past, in order to generate new energy to meet the needs of the future.

Rammohan was a great Bengali. His work was then taken over by Devendranath Tagore, who died only in 1905. Devendranath deserves a reputation for himself, quite apart from his being the father of Rabi Tagore. His Tattvabodhini Sabha merged with the Brahmo Samaj to produce a powerful spiritual-intellectual current. Both Rammohan and Devendranath were anti-Sankara, Anti-Advaita, Anti-caste in their approach to Hinduism, deeply interested in contemporary problems, especially in the political emancipation and spiritual awakening of India.

~~He~~^{Born} Half a century later than Debendranath (1817-1905), yet very much his contemporary, who in fact died three years earlier than he did, was Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). When his master

Ramakrishna died in 1886, he was only 23, but he became the modern apostle of Hinduism to the west. It was the new synthesis of Hinduism composed of ideas from the three schools of dvaita, advaita and visishtadvaita, put together on a mystical-pragmatic rather than on a philosophical basis that Vivekananda and the other Ramakrishna ~~sny~~ sannyasis from Belur Mutt took to different parts of the world. Here was the spiritual flower of the seed of early Indian Renaissance thought based on Upanishadic Universalism. "Liberation of self for the service of all men"—this is indeed a great contribution from Bengal to the Indian renaissance. In all modesty I would like to point out two of the weaknesses of the Ramakrishna—Vivekananda ^{ach} ~~appro~~ ~~ved~~ which have prevented this vital movement from becoming the true leader of the Indian renaissance.

First, it still lacks intellectual vigour. Its universalism is too ~~undis~~ indiscriminating to have sufficient appeal for a trained mind. It does appeal to the religiously inclined pragmatic mystical mind, but Ramakrishna Sannyasis have generally failed to cultivate a high degree of competent carefulness in their intellectual effort.

Secondly by isolating the so-called religious element in man from the rest of human aspirations and concerns, the Ramakrishna mission often looks irrelevant to many whose interest in humanity and its destiny may not be grounded in a religious or mystical temperament. The social, economic, political, technological and

moral problems confronting India and the rest of humanity today have to be taken quite seriously by a religious movement if it is to learn to speak to the deeper needs of man later on. Too easy a reconciliation between the world of history and the world of personal spiritual realisation can only lead to superficiality. The problem of the relation of this world to the eternal world still needs to be spiritually tackled and adequately formulated.

Vivekananda or Narendranath Dutt as he was formerly, was a great Bengali who had been shaped first by the Brahmo Samaj, and then by Sri Ramakrishna, his great Bengali guru. The young, dynamic, brilliant, eloquent yogi who died at the age of 39 was passionately concerned for Indian independence, and for glorifying India in the eyes of a West which tended to despise her. I feel, however, that when the new vitality of the Indian renaissance took shape in a purely religious context, the Ramakrishna movement itself became too religious to care for the needs and aspirations of ordinary men, and thought too loosely to satisfy men with trained minds.

The other branch of the Indian renaissance which started expressing itself through Devendranath Tagore and his Tattvabodhini Sabha was much more intellectually strict, and expressed itself in terms which carried conviction to the educated Indian. Rabindranath, who hardly went to school, was shaped by the intellectual vitality of his father's Brahma Samajist thought, tempered by the literary

qualities of the new revival in Bengali literature associated with the name of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. I shall not say very much about Rabi Tagore now. He is a great hero for me. A ~~man whose~~ ^{His} poetic vision of the finite universe as an artistic manifestation of the great Visvakarma who is infinite, comes so close to my own view of the universe that ~~his~~ ^{Tagore's} poetry speaks to my heart in a way which no other Indian writing does. The unity of the universe, not merely the unity of mankind, but of nature and man, of sand and sea, of trees and rivers, of bird and animal, all bound together with mankind ~~in~~ this is India's vision, and it needs to be recovered in ~~our~~ ^{when} our day ~~our~~ technological ~~work~~ world is too ~~prone~~ ^{prone} to separate man from nature, and to make man an arbitrary and capricious lord of nature. This technological view has built great bridges over earth and sky, but not between man and nature. And nature turns to dirt and poison in the hands of technological man, rather dance with joy at his life-giving touch.

Light, my light, world-filling light,
 eye-kissing light, heart-gladdening light!
Ah! light dances, my beloved, at the centre of my being;
 light strikes, my beloved, the chords of my love;
 sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter flits over the earth!
Butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light!
Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of waves of light!
Light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my beloved, and
it scatters gems in profusion.
Joy spreads from leaf to leaf, my love,
and gladness without measure.
Heaven's river has drowned its banks
and the flood of joy spreads everywhere

In our India today the two most baneful values of modern civilization have become regnant and rampant - the values of acquisition and aggression. We have become a people who will do anything, in order merely to get, to acquire, to possess.

Tagore spoke to us that what we get is trash, that only what we give is pure gold. By plucking her petals one does not gather the beauty of the flower. To gather is to scatter, to scatter in generosity is to be rich. The heart is only for giving away with a tear and a song, my love.

But his vision went further than generosity and love. He saw beyond, to the One who comes from across the ^{river}~~richer~~ toward us.

Have you not heard his silent steps?

He comes, comes, ever comes

Every moment and every age, every day and every night, he
comes, comes, ever comes

Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mind,

but all their notes

have always proclaimed, "He comes, comes,
ever comes"

In the fragrant days of sunny April and

through the forest path he comes, comes,
ever comes.

In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot
of clouds, he comes, comes, ever comes,

In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon

my heart, and it is the golden

touch of his feet that makes my joy to sh

The unfinished Indian renaissance of the 19th century has been swallowed up by the pervasive power of an acquisitive civilisation. Our five-year plans are hybrid products made out of the greedy ideas of Western capitalism and Eastern socialism, both equally unresponsive to the real depths of man, refusing to ask the questions that really matter.

Poverty and suffering do matter. But the relief of material want is itself a deeply spiritual act, coming out of the depths of man's fellow-feeling for man, and when the fight against poverty becomes a callous plan imposed from above, without roots in the rekindled compassion of man, the resources poured^u out on the top of the pyramid seldom reach the base.

But can government save India? Can five-year plans and a successful war in Bangladesh bring fulfillment to the millions in India? When greed, aggression, and unthinking, unfeeling, unrepentant egoism hold sway over the minds of men, will more food and more jobs bring freedom and joy to our people?

Man's heart is anguished with the fever of unrest
with the poison of self-seeking
with a thirst that knows no end
Countries far and wide flaunt on their foreheads
The blood-red mark of hatred
Touch them with thy right hand
Make them one in spirit
Bring harmony into their life
Bring rhythm of beauty

O Serene, O Free,

In thine immeasurable mercy and goodness

Wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth!

The unfinished Renaissance of India cries out to be completed. It needs to be revived, not by Government ~~by~~ but by ordinary people like you and me, who refuse to be sucked into the maelstrom of pettiness and greed, of ^{UV}chauvinism and acquisitiveness, of measuring a man's worth by his position or property, of the ~~ide~~ idolatry of political power and material wealth, of the crimes of indolence and indifference, of regionalism and communalism, of exploitation and injustice.

Bengal must once again rise to her ancient heights¹. What the Malayalee lacks is a sufficient sense for art and drama, and for a genuine intellectual effort. Tagore showed us the way - combine art and poetry with a genuine intellectual search, based on Upanishadic Universalism but drawing from all the source-
-springs of human thought throughout the ages and in all civilization. It must be an artistic-intellectual-poetic effort geared to the needs of our hungry millions, but capable of going beyond the coarse materialism of both capitalism and Marxism, to sound the depths of man in a new way. This calls for imagination and unrelenting effort. But it also calls for a genuine meeting of the Malayalee and Bengali minds and spirits. We could once again, with some genuine effort, light the lamp of the Indian Renaissance, so that it may move forward to its goal, namely to become, like the Buddha, a Viswadeepa, a light of the world, ^{for} a world groping about in darkness, crying out for light.

The rain has held back for days and days, my God,

in my arid heart.

The horizon is fiercely naked - not the thinnest cover

of a soft cloud

Not the vaguest hint of a distant cool shower

Send thine angry storm, dark with death

if it is thy wish, and with ^{lashes}~~lashes~~ of lightning

Startle the sky from end to end

But call back, my lord, call back this

pervading silent heat, still and keen and cruel,

burning the heart with dire des~~pair~~

Let the cloud of grace bend low from above like the

tearful look of the mother

on the day of the father's ^{wrath.}~~wrath.~~

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In one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses
spread out and touch this world at thy feet.

Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed
showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation
to Thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single
current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their
mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal
home, in one salutation to Thee.

It is Tagore's vision, with Debendranath's intellectual clarity and Rabindranath's poetic depth, popularized by the religious zeal of a Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, but directly related to the economic political and cultural needs of India today, that can provide the framework for completing the unfinished Renaissance of India. May those of us who live in the end of the 20th century, be privileged to see the movement that began at the beginning of the 19th, come into full fruition. May the peace and the Joy of Christ be with you all.